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Georgia Awarded \$34 Million Money Follows the Person Grant for Alternatives to Nursing Care

ATLANTA – The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services awarded the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) a \$34 million grant over the course of five years to build Medicaid long-term care programs that will help people transition out of institutions and back into the community. The Project will be a joint effort between DCH and the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR).

Georgia is one of 13 states and the District of Columbia to receive the Money Follows the Person Grant (MFP). More than 1,400 elderly individuals and persons with disabilities will be assisted to move back into their homes or other residences over the course of the five-year project.

"We are pleased to have received this award which will allow us create better choices for seniors and persons with disabilities regarding where they live and receive services," said Dr. Rhonda Meadows, DCH Commissioner.

The MFP initiative empowers states to allow Medicaid funding to 'follow the person' to the most appropriate and preferred setting, and provides special funding for one time or short term expenses that enable the person to make the transition between the institution and community settings.

"This is an exhilarating and meaningful option for elderly Georgians who are pondering where to spend the remainder of their days," said Meadows. "This grant will help Georgia eliminate barriers that may prevent individuals from having a choice in where they live."

As a participant in this initiative, Georgia will qualify for a higher percentage of federal matching dollars to help cover the costs of moving people out of institutions and into community settings. The higher matching rate will be paid for one year after an individual moves out of an institution and into the community.

The grant program was included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 and is a key part of the President's New Freedom Initiative, which is a nationwide effort to remove barriers to community living for people of all ages with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

"At DHR, our mission is to be a resource for families, not a substitute," said DHR Commissioner B.J. Walker. "This grant will help us do that, allowing us to offer more choice in services in people's homes and communities."

The first year of the project will bring together state officials, providers and advocates to identify and establish the services and systems needed to successfully transition individuals to the community. Anyone interested in being a part of this planning effort can contact Judy Hagebak, DCH Director of Aging and Community Services at 404-657-5467.

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About the Department of Community Health

The Georgia Department of Community Health champions:

ACCESS to affordable, quality health care in our communities

RESPONSIBLE health planning and use of health care resources

HEALTHY behaviors and improved health outcomes

Equal Opportunity Employer